

Distance Learning Today

AUGUST 3, 2007 • VOLUME 1 • ISSUE 3

Highlights

**Outwitting the
Schoolyard Bully**
Learning online as a
safe haven

**Distance Learning in
the Nation's Defense**
Making it work in
the military

A Story of Two Soldiers
An online instructor's
report from the front lines

Careers in Nursing
A bright job outlook drives
distance learning

**The Science of
Geography and the Art
of Doing Good**
Two online success stories

**A Parent's Guide to
Online Learning, K-12**
Is it right for your child?

**Security in the Online
Schoolhouse**
Tools and tactics to
insure integrity

Bridging A National Knowledge Gap



by John F. Ebersole

It is impossible to ignore the explosion of knowledge happening all around us. Some have suggested that the sum of all that is known doubles every seven years. We accumulate more knowledge in one year than previous generations accumulated in a lifetime. At the same time, the shelf life of knowledge is declining. In the biotech field for example, those pursuing a four-year degree may find that much of what they learned in their first

Filling the Needs of the Knowledge Economy

The emergence and growth of online learning in the past fifteen years is one example of how the process of learning itself can be adapted to meet the educational demands of the knowledge economy. More than 96 percent of the nation's colleges and universities currently offer online learning opportunities. Roughly 4 million students were taking advantage of these opportunities in the fall of 2006.

More than 96 percent of the nation's colleges & universities
currently offer online learning opportunities.

year is obsolete by the time they graduate.

Ongoing technological advancements place knowledge at a premium and create a demand for the continuous pursuit of that knowledge. How can individuals keep pace in a global, knowledge-based economy? The answer lies in our ability to transform the way we learn. The same technological advances that fuel the knowledge explosion are providing dramatic innovations in learning.

More important than its increasing popularity is the demonstrated quality of the online learning experience. In its 2006 annual report, the National Survey of Student Engagement detailed how online students reported higher levels of academic challenge. It also found that these students engaged more often in "deep learning" activities, and reported greater developmental gains from their experience than campus-based students. The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation,

Continued on page 3

Distance Learning Today

BRIDGING A NATIONAL KNOWLEDGE GAP 1

A leading educator outlines distance learning's role in the new knowledge economy

OUTWITTING THE SCHOOLYARD BULLY 4

Learning online puts threatened kids out of the bully's reach

GETTING THE LAY OF THE LAND ONLINE 6

Degrees in geography go to work for native Americans and New Orleans

DISTANCE LEARNING IN THE NATION'S DEFENSE 8

How the Department of Defense became the Department of Distance Learning

A STORY OF STUDENT SOLDIERS 9

An online instructor reports from the front lines

SECURITY IN THE ONLINE SCHOOLHOUSE 11

Reliably ID'ing students and improving testing protocols are critical to distance learning's future

NURSING JOB SECTOR HEALTHY; ONLINE DEMAND GROWS 12

Distance learning will address a looming nursing shortage

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO ONLINE LEARNING, K-12 14

The right questions to ask before deciding if it's right for your child

Publisher: John Kelly

Editor: Kevin O'Neill

HOW TO REACH US:

Distance Learning Today
c/o Brown Kelly O'Neill & Partners
79 Fifth Ave., 16th Floor
New York, NY 10003
Phone: 212-367-3900
Fax: 212-367-3917
dltoday@bkoadv.com

SPONSOR:

John G. Flores, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer
United States Distance Learning
Association (USDLA)
8 Winter Street, Suite 508
Boston, MA 02108
Phone: 800-275-5162
Fax: 617-399-1771
www.usdla.org

Contents of this insert copyright © 2007
by Brown Kelly O'Neill & Partners.
All rights reserved. Reprints available.

If you would like to propose or submit an article for future issues of Distance Learning Today, please send all materials (including any illustrations) to dltoday@bkoadv.com

To our valued readers:

Welcome to the third edition of Distance Learning Today, a quarterly supplement to USA TODAY in partnership with the United States Distance Learning Association.



As we approach the middle of summer, it's important to remember that not all students are vacationing – distance learners around the world continue to learn and share ideas. As we have explored in Distance Learning Today, distance learning provides the opportunity to obtain education without the constraints of time and place. Through the articles and advertisements in this issue, we hope to raise awareness of the many quality courses, degrees and certificate programs available through distance learning technologies and the vast opportunities available to students upon graduation.

As the leading distance learning association in the United States, we encourage you to visit our new website at www.usdla.org. You'll find information about the 2007 International Forum For Women in E-Learning being held November 28-30 in Santa Fe, New Mexico and sponsored by USDLA. In addition, the USDLA will be offering a host of new research services to help guide the development of policy and application for distance learning and its influence on Pre-K through Grade 12, higher education, home schooling, continuing education, corporate training, military and government training, and telehealth. Finally, stay tuned for details regarding the 2008 USDLA National Conference being held in April in St. Louis MO. Our website is continually updated, so please visit often.

Have a wonderful summer!

John G. Flores, Ph.D.

Chief Executive Officer

United States Distance Learning Association



BRIDGING A NATIONAL KNOWLEDGE GAP:

Continued from cover

an organization dedicated to helping educational institutions improve their online programs, recently reported that more than 60 percent of the nation's academic leaders rate online instruction to be "as good or better" than traditional face-to-face offerings.

The importance of online learning is becoming increasingly apparent. The U.S. Department of Labor stated that 90 percent of the fastest-growing jobs in the information and services economy require post-secondary education. Today, only a quarter of adult Americans hold the higher degree necessary to fill the jobs driving our future economic growth. The percentage is lower still among minority communities. Overall, America's college graduation rate has fallen from third among industrialized nations less than twenty years ago, to twelfth today.

This widening knowledge gap ultimately threatens our economic well being in a world that has been called "flat." The information and services industries are less beholden than ever

to geographic boundaries for their employees. As a result, the jobs may go wherever the knowledge is being acquired. Online learning creates new opportunities for professionals to continuously learn and hone skills that will pay dividends to both employer and employee. Lifelong learning is already a necessity in many fields to ensure competence and competitiveness. Online learning is evolving as an alternative to traditional educational institutions that affords students greater flexibility to pursue lifelong learning in a challenging and rewarding environment.

Nontraditional students need nontraditional solutions

Increasingly, higher education's student population includes working parents, overseas military personnel and those with limited financial resources. Online learning helps this growing pool of nontraditional students transcend time and distance by bringing the learning environment to them while allowing them to retrain while fully employed. And, while it is perhaps counterintuitive, online learning can offer a more

personal learning experience. Advances in information technologies allow online institutions to tailor educational programs to individual needs and learning styles. It also enables them to provide sophisticated simulations that allow students to demonstrate and apply specific skills and knowledge.

The industries of the future will be driven by knowledge and information. To thrive in such an economy, the workforce of the future will need access to continuous education while balancing work demands with family life. As the demand for an educated workforce grows and the percentage of those earning degrees declines, online learning is seen as one way to bridge the gap. It is a growing and real educational opportunity that meets the needs of a changing society where knowledge is essential, but the time and flexibility to acquire that knowledge is limited.

John F. Ebersole is the president of Excelsior College.

THE FISCHLER SCHOOL > YOU > THE LIVES YOU TOUCH > THE LIVES THEY TOUCH >

What you learn here and how you learn it will not only transform your life, but the lives of everyone around you. When we opened our doors more than 30 years ago, we shattered the barriers of traditional learning, causing a ripple effect that can still be felt today. We're the Fischler School of Education and Human Services. Our ideas, our approach, and our programs inspire educators to inspire their students to move the world.

cause an effect > www.FischlerSchool.nova.edu 866-499-0784

FISCHLER SCHOOL
OF EDUCATION & HUMAN SERVICES

NSU NOVA
SOUTHEASTERN
UNIVERSITY

Nova Southeastern University admits students of any race, color, sexual orientation, and national or ethnic origin. Nova Southeastern University is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097, Telephone number: 404-679-4501) to award associate's, bachelor's, master's, educational specialist, and doctoral degrees. 11-060-06zSHK

Outwitting the Schoolyard Bully

by Marilyn Mosley Gordanier

Schools report that more than a quarter of a million students are physically attacked during the school day with 160,000 kids missing school everyday due to bullying and school violence. Nearly a million students across the U.S. bring weapons to school every month. More than 5.7 million young people in the U.S. are estimated to be involved in bullying as either a bully, a target of bullying or both. Unchecked bullying can escalate to more serious violence as 75% of school-shooting incidents have been linked to harassment and bullying issues.

Bullying is deeply seated in our tough and competitive culture. Experts maintain that it is a barbaric, ingrained human survival behavior. Though regrettable, that may explain its widespread presence in our everyday lives: in schools, households, workplaces, sports arenas, media and politics. However, with a nation shaken by recent school tragedies, it remains difficult to comprehend what fuels such behavior. What's not difficult is assessing the impact on its victims.

The tension and anxiety created by bullying is burdening kids with worry. The threat affects concentration, health, relationships and self-worth. It can create social isolation and depression with long-term consequences. One out of every 10 students who drop out of school does so because of repeated bullying, and those who are bullied are five times more likely to be depressed and far more likely to be suicidal.

Brock Bowman, a ninth grader living near Columbus, Ohio who found difficulty in the classroom despite his high IQ, has found a solution through distance learning. Brock was not thriving in his public school and, like many today, was labeled ADD. Angie Bowman, Brock's mother said, "This diagnosis led to Brock being placed in a reading special services program, which only made matters worse. His peers picked on him relentlessly and his self-esteem plummeted." Brock dreaded going to school. The stress left him completely exhausted, school became unbearable and they looked into distance learning options. "I knew it was the right solution for our family," said Angie. "We were able to find a fully accredited school with caring teachers that eliminated negative social distractions and reignited Brock's interest in learning. At Laurel Springs School, the focus is on Brock's learning style, interests and passions, plus they provide traditional school experiences like a diploma, graduation, peer activities and senior prom. Families looking for peaceful solutions to bullying are turning increasingly to distance learning providers like Laurel Springs School. Established in 1991, Laurel Springs now has more than 4,250 students in 50 states and in 43 countries. Distance learning in an all-inclusive learning environment creates a place for skill building and mastery without the threats of bullies. For Brock, Laurel Springs offers web-based and text-based curriculum built on state standards. Instruction is targeted to his innate learning style profile; a proactive evaluation of his disposition,

motivators, interests and learning modalities. No attacks occur. No guns are drawn. Students and families blossom in the natural flow of the learning process.

Nick Marks-Paschal, an eleventh grader, was emotionally shut-down at school even though he demonstrated creative genius outside of the classroom. According to his mother, Shelley Marks, "Nick was put-off by school-wide bullying and antagonizing. He withdrew, not wanting to participate in this dynamic, and others called him stupid and slow. At Laurel Springs, he took the Learning Styles Profile and the results were an astounding endorsement of him." Nick's learning style is 'invent/perform' – he learns best by discovering, designing and exploring in an independent environment. He

was assigned a teacher appropriate for his learning style and together, they designed curriculum to bring out his highest 'invent' capacity. "Nick is inspired by the aligned focus of his learning and has a huge digital multimedia design career ahead. He is a highly accomplished young person who demonstrates that harmony can positively alter someone's entire future even during the teenage years," Shelley added.

Distance learning is a growing option with the impact of the Internet, educational software, video learning tools and online communications systems. It began mostly as a higher education convenience for completion of college and continuing educational credits. Now the trend is evolving to support K-12 students, challenging the traditional premise that learning occurs best within the confines of a classroom under the control of faculty. "Most people are still in the Industrial Age mind-set, even though our economy has moved into the information knowledge age that requires an 'unleashing of talent,'" according to noted author,

Stephen R. Covey. "Management means control; leadership means release." The same goes for our educational systems and finding ways to foster greatness beyond drawing lines of control that can breed conflict.

Schools like Laurel Springs have the information age in mind and are bringing distance learning programs to K-12 students. By understanding each student's learning style, goals, interests and innate talent, there is a release of pressure to fit in and a rare feeling of being wholly recognized. And with such a focus on each student, perhaps our educational system can evolve beyond the barbaric pattern of bullying. By linking students like Brock and Nick with excellent teachers and personalized curriculum, K-12 distance learning provides a realistic alternative. Students, parents, counselors, administrators and teachers have begun to recognize that distance learning for K-12 students is transformative – moving education from a school-centered to a student-centered approach and often providing talented, tormented kids with a safe haven from the schoolyard bully.

Marilyn Mosley Gordanier is the founder and executive director of Laurel Springs School.



One out of every 10 students
who drop out of school does
so because of repeated bullying.

LYNN UNIVERSITY

www.lynn.edu/online

Accelerated program: 8-week terms year round

Undergraduate

Bachelor of Science in Business Administration
Bachelor of Science in Psychology
Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice

Graduate

Master of Business Administration

- International Business
- Marketing
- Hospitality Management
- Financial Valuation and Investment Mgmt.
- Mass Communication and Media Mgmt.
- Sports and Athletics Administration
- Aviation Management

Master of Science in Administration

- Criminal Justice
- Emergency Planning and Administration

Master of Education in Educational Leadership

- School Administration
- School Administration with ESOL Endorsement
- Higher Education Administration

Ph.D. in Corporate and Organizational Mgmt.

Certificate programs

Emergency and Disaster Management
Emergency Planning and Administration

Competitive tuition.

Scholarships available for qualified students.

Lynn University is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award baccalaureate, master's and doctoral degrees. Lynn University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, disability and/or age in administration of its educational and admission policies, scholarship and loan programs, athletic and/or other school-administered programs.



LYNN UNIVERSITY

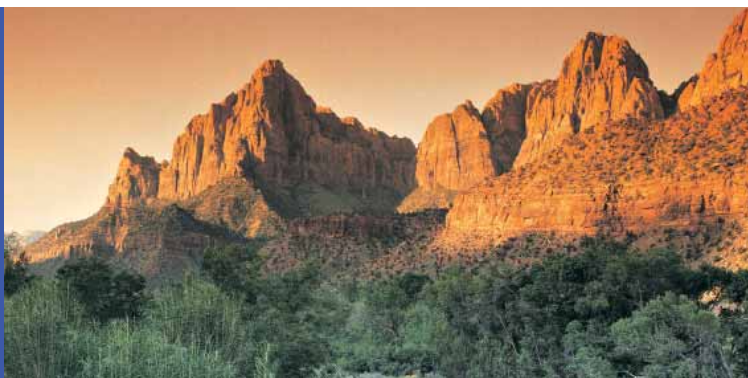
3601 North Military Trail | Boca Raton, FL 33431

www.lynn.edu/admissions | 561-237-7900 | 800-888-LYNN (Toll-Free)



Online

Getting the Lay of the Land Online



by Cole Hons

On the surface, Celene Elm and Andrew MacInnes live very different lives. Elm, a member of the Oneida nation in Wisconsin, is a grandmother, tribal elder and avid hunter. MacInnes, an employee of the Plaquemines Parish Government (just south of New Orleans) is a dedicated urbanite, jazz buff and father of one. That both have completed courses in the same online education program is a testament to the wide range of life experiences adult students bring to this emerging learning environment.

"It's great because you can go at your own speed," observed Elm. "If people are a little bit slower getting used to the

Facing the Flood Waters of Katrina

As Coastal Zone Administrator of Plaquemines Parish, MacInnes was simply looking for a way to keep abreast of the latest developments in his field. Little did he know that two quarters into his course work, he'd be applying his new skills to solve logistics problems in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

"I had an immediate and critical need to use the techniques I was learning in my degree," MacInnes said, remembering the weeks he spent supporting relief volunteers and military personnel throughout his Parish. "It was critical to have the most accurate information on staging locations, fuel depots, detour areas and hazardous sites."

In the middle of the crisis, MacInnes was glad to have an

Two semesters into his course work, MacInnes was applying his new skills to solve logistics problems in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

technology, it's OK. The whole class doesn't get held up waiting for them to catch up, like they would in a traditional classroom."

Both Elm and MacInnes have earned certificates in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) from Penn State's online World Campus. In the rapidly expanding field of GIS, sophisticated mapping software is applied to meet a wide variety of challenges, including development planning and crisis management. Both of these adult students were able to apply skills they learned online to dramatic effect.

online community of professors and students to rely on. "Many of the other students had great ideas, suggestions and offers of help," he recalled. "Some of them even came down to work on the Gulf Coast for response and recovery efforts."

"Our online students share a variety of challenges, in class and in their personal and professional lives," observed senior instructor and manager of the Master of GIS Program David DiBiase. "This leads to a surprisingly strong sense of community, even though they may never meet face-to-face."

Helping a sovereign nation secure its land.

For Elm, the GIS indigenous planning director for the Oneida Nation, online courses provided an opportunity to alter the destiny of her entire tribe.

"We are a sovereign nation that's in the process of buying back our land," she explained. "My department's job is to analyze and present geographic data to a committee that makes decisions that will impact our community for generations. So, we've got to be accurate."

Since earning her GIS certificate in 2004, Elm has used her expanded skills to establish a new and innovative land use designation process. This process has proven to be a critically important tool for her nation, whose original landbase has been carved up into thousands of non-contiguous parcels. It was adopted as tribal law in 2005.

"We've purchased back about 8,000 acres so far using this GIS-enhanced process," Elm said. "With this



Andrew MacInnes, Coastal Zone Administrator of Plaquemines Parish, New Orleans



Celene Elm, Geographic Information Systems planning director for the Oneida Nation in Wisconsin

system, we are able to look at a piece of land and really know if it will be suitable for our needs—whether it’s housing, economic development or the restricted land which we are protecting and putting aside for future generations. There was no way we would have been able to do those things before.”

Elm and MacInnes both believe that online education has firmly established its value in the mainstream, both in terms of career growth and personal development.

“The potential for GIS was not really understood by all of

the people I came in contact with,” noted MacInnes, “and everybody is amazed that I was able to learn this stuff from Penn State online. They just think it’s really cool that you can do this online with a respected university.”

As for Elm, her online education led her to develop training modules that she has shared with others nationally—and to inspire other tribal nations to start thinking about starting their own GIS departments. “I’ve really blossomed as a different type of person,” she enthused. “I never expected I’d have the confidence to do this.”

Their advice for other adults considering online education?

“You have to adjust to a whole new learning environment,” said MacInnes. “I think I was not fully prepared for what it meant to sit down and try to learn about a program. It has its quirks and challenges, but it definitely has its advantages. As long as you have the discipline, you can really focus on the things you want to learn. Now I feel that I’ve benefited enormously from the experience.”

“It’s a great way to maintain your edge,” noted Elm, “to keep up with the young ones coming out of school. Especially in a technology-related job like GIS, where you’re never done learning. Now it’s great in my department, where we blend younger and older generations, with their different perspectives and abilities. It’s a really dynamic place to be.”

Cole Hons is the coordinator of public information at Penn State Outreach.

MASTER

STRATEGIC LEADER

NYU Master’s in Management and Systems (offered online)

This degree offers a unique, powerful convergence of worldwide best practices, executive skills, techniques, and strategies, with faculty who are leading scholars and practitioners. You can apply insights you gain immediately. Offered online, on-site, or through a combination of both formats, this innovative program is built on our reputation as a world-class educator and award winning pioneer in online learning. With in-depth study of Strategy and Leadership, Enterprise Risk Management, Database Technologies, or Systems Management, you’ll be at the forefront of business.

Your NYU experience provides the foundation for a powerful network that will benefit you for years to come. Become one of the new generation of multidisciplinary strategic leaders. Find out more.

www.scps.nyu.edu/531 1-888-998-7204, ext.531

New York University is an affirmative action/equal opportunity institution. ©2007 New York University School of Continuing and Professional Studies

NYU SCPS
SCHOOL OF CONTINUING & PROFESSIONAL STUDIES
At the center of the center of it all.

Distance Learning in the Nation's Defense

by Dr. Robert A. Wisher

Training and educating the U.S. military is an enormous enterprise. In excess of \$20 billion is spent to train and educate servicemembers each year, involving the delivery of thousands of courses for hundreds of specialized occupational areas. The stakes are very high. Military training must prepare individuals to enter into harm's way and perform physically and mentally demanding tasks at the highest levels of proficiency.

In addition to the 1.4 million active duty personnel, training and educational services are provided to 1.1 million ready reservists, more than 720,000 civilian personnel and 110,000 military dependents in K-12 schooling. These courses are taught at military academies, staff colleges, training centers, armories, reserve centers and training ranges around the world.

To contain costs and extend the instruction's reach, the military utilizes nearly every delivery method imaginable.



Conventional methods, such as classroom instruction, are being blended with distance-learning approaches, for which the military has been a leading advocate. Examples stretch from televised training in the 1950's to Web-based distributed learning today. Other examples are videotapes, video teleconferencing, audio teletraining, compact discs, multiplayer games, stand-alone and networked simulators, and training that is embedded in actual equipment. Not all tasks are best taught via distance learning, but for those that are, the savings are appreciable.

Controlling Costs, Unleashing Operational Value

Bringing the instruction to the learners, rather than learners to the instruction, reduces travel, temporary duty and permanent change of station costs. More importantly, the time saved through technology-based instruction allows personnel to be released earlier for operational duties—reducing personnel costs and increasing operational value.

For forms of distance learning that embrace individualized student interaction, a good guide is the 'rule of thirds.' Based on an extensive analysis of assessments of technology-based instruction, the rule of thirds suggests that well-designed, interactive training technologies reduce the cost of instruction by about one-third, and either reduce time of instruction by about one-third or increase the amount of skills and knowledge acquired by about one-third.

A logical question, then, is how does the military leverage distance learning to educate and train for its many responsibilities, tasks and challenges, some new, some old? In particular, how can quality instruction be made available anytime, anywhere and tailored to individual needs? Ten years ago, the military examined these questions, creating a program based on openness, partnerships and good will.

A National Imperative Creates Cooperation Across the Armed Services

With the notable exception of simulators, the military was not fully utilizing technology for individual instruction. High technology was not finding its way into training programs. The principal roadblock, identified in 1997, was the lack of interoperability across computer-based instructional systems. Interoperability refers to the capability of different programs to exchange data through a common set of procedures, formats and protocols. Simply stated, learning content developed



**Lowering
the cost of
Higher
Education**

**NORTHCENTRAL
UNIVERSITY**

Bachelor's degrees now
\$250 a credit hour
— no residency required!

100% ONLINE DEGREES
DOCTORAL • MASTER'S • BACHELOR'S
Business • Education • Psychology

**Convenient. Affordable.
Accredited.**

www.ncu.edu/compare

A Story of Student Soldiers

by Errol Craig Sull

There was a time when “distance learning” meant commuting 50 miles or so to reach the college nearest your home town. Today, students complete their degrees from literally half a world away: a remote lighthouse in Maine, a cattle ranch in Montana, a military post in Iraq. In 12 years of teaching online, some of my most memorable and satisfying encounters have included American military personnel. I’ve learned that the distance learning revolution provides an enormous service to the young men and women who are serving their country by giving them access to education’s transformative power despite their circumstances.

Take, for example, Paul McLaughlin — a U.S. soldier stationed in Iraq. Having planned on a college degree, it was interrupted when he was deployed to Iraq — but not for long. He put it this way:

“Being able to take college courses

using my computer, here in Iraq, allows me to not have my plans for college put on hold. I get good instructor feedback, my textbook is in use every day, and each time I complete a course it’s one more step towards my goal of a college degree. Sure, there are times when ‘stuff’ gets in the way — that’s the nature of what I do



Paul McLaughlin, Chief Warrant Officer Three, is a Senior Automotive Maintenance Officer with the U.S. Army in northern Iraq. He’s from Burlington, Vermont and was deployed out of Ft. Hood, Texas.

— but when I get back to my computer, I know my instructors and my course will be waiting for me. I might be 6,000+ miles away from the United States, but distance learning lets me be in my classroom every day.”

Paul is on one side of the world and Jarrett Gilliam, another U.S. soldier, is on the other in Seoul, South Korea. His deployment is different from Paul’s, his location is different (more than 5,000 miles from the U.S. and he just finished his last course requirement for a degree — but distance learning allowed him to continue his studies, uninterrupted. He wrote:

“It’s been several years since I took any college courses, and when I did I was in a traditional classroom where I could see my professor and hang out with other students. I had no idea what to expect from distance learning. But from the first day I sat down at my laptop and began discussing various topics with others in the class, received feedback on assignments from my professors, and read over the chapters in the textbook

Continued from page 8

in one vendor’s system used by one Service was not able to be delivered in another vendor’s system used by another Service. Standards were not in place, and opportunities were being lost.

The Advanced Distributed Learning (ADL) Initiative was formed ten years ago to remedy this problem. An Executive Order, issued in 1999, charged the Department of Defense to lead federal participation with business, academia and specification groups in developing consensus standards for training software and associated services. One result of ADL was the establishment of the SCORM reference model which is now in wide use around the world. This model allows content developed in one system to play in another, overcoming the hurdle identified ten years ago.

The ADL vision is leading to a marketplace of “learning objects.” These are exchangeable elements, such as a course module, that serve as the foundation for online educational and training programs. Within the military, the “objects” are centrally registered, and they incorporate specifications and standards as part of their operation. The objects can be recomposed to suit a specific training situation tailored to an individual’s learning needs. ADL

is dramatically raising the bar in distance learning.

The Defense Acquisition University A “Student” Body of 134,000

An award-winning example is the work at the Defense Acquisition University (DAU), a corporate university that trains the acquisition, technology and logistics workforce of 134,000 people within the Department of Defense. Faced with the need to provide training as quickly and as cost effectively as possible, DAU has made strategic decisions that have allowed it to experience both growth and budget efficiencies simultaneously.

The enterprise provides workforce support in critical areas: certification training, performance support, communities of practice and continuous learning. Each area is supported by the learning network architecture that enables delivery of content in multiple modes, enriching interaction between learners, instructors and content. By focusing on content as a strategic asset and implementing SCORM, DAU plans to benefit from the system’s scalability by identifying opportunities for the reuse and sharing of assets across multiple

Continued on page 13



STUDENT SOLDIERS: Continued from page 9

and other helpful online information, including the library services, I really felt like I was back in college! To be honest, I'm still amazed that here, in South Korea, I'm instantly transported into a college classroom in the United States through the technology of the computer—it is quite amazing. And there's an added bonus that I and others in the service taking distance learning courses can tell you: it helps take our minds off our jobs over here, something that's really important once in awhile."

There are thousands of others in a variety of situations where distance learning is the only umbilical cord to a college education. No doubt, you know at least one person who is now taking a college course through distance learning. Unlike many who can create their own environment for distance learning, students like Paul and Jarrett cannot, and thus different approaches must be taken to assure the best possible online learning experience. What follows are suggestions for a better distance learning experience if you find yourself in a strange land, an isolated situation, or a less-than-ideal studying environment.

Florida Virtual School
is considered the
leading national
provider of online
middle and high
school courses.

➤ Since 1997, more than 125,000 students have taken courses with us. Our current success rate is 85%.

➤ To discuss your best online learning options, call 407-317-3326 ext. 2817, or visit www.flvs.net.

Florida
Virtual School

www.flvs.net
407-317-3326 ext. 2817



Sergeant First Class Jarrett A. Gilliam is a Technical Counterintelligence Agent with the U.S. Army in Seoul, Korea. He's from Monahans, Texas.

Find your best available time and place — and make those your college cubicle.

Unexpected interruptions, an unusual setting or irregular study times might be what you are facing. Don't panic, make the best of it: choose a time, place and setting that works best for you. If possible, have something next to your computer to remind you of your course's long-term importance (picture of a family member, a motivational saying, etc.); use aides to help you focus (e.g., music, "Do Not Disturb — Learning" sign).

Accept that interruptions may be the norm, so save everything frequently.

One of the basic rules for anyone taking distance learning is to regularly save work, but this may be especially important if your location is unpredictable (a war zone or household full of teenagers, for example). You don't want to suddenly close your computer only to find later that your work has been lost, fully or partially. So, the rule: save your work every 5 minutes.

It may take time for books and CDs to reach you, so have a "Plan B."

This is a common problem with folks who are rather isolated, but you can overcome it. Contact the publisher, explain your situation and ask for a free desk copy (they will often agree); let other students in the class know, and ask for their help; search the Internet for any readings you may need prior to your materials arriving; ask your instructor if your first week or so of missing materials can be posted in the course or sent to you via email.

Let your instructor know of anything about your circumstances that might impede your progress in the course.

Not only does this give the instructor a "heads up" to keep you from being

penalized and possibly dropped from the course, but this communication helps take some pressure off you. If you have Discussion and other areas, alert your classmates as well.

Don't hesitate to ask for an extension if situations beyond your control put you behind.

Most schools have policies that permit extensions for completing a course due to factors beyond your control. Don't hesitate to ask for a legitimate extension—again, it'll relieve some of the pressure on you and allow you to focus on producing quality not rushed work. Always remember the life-changing impact your distance learning can have. While this is true for anyone taking courses, it is an especially important reminder for folks who are geographically or militarily isolated. Sometimes, the rigorous circumstances surrounding you can make you lose sight of the "down-the-road" purpose of taking these courses. Remember that what you accomplish through distance learning can have an effect far beyond the number of weeks the course runs.

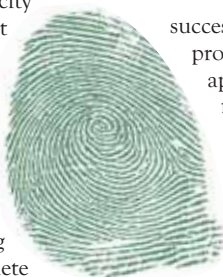
Distance learning makes higher education available to nearly anyone who has a computer and Internet connectivity. It is truly a wonder of technology and allows those who are isolated — for whatever reason — to learn, to explore, to grow. Paul McLaughlin perhaps summed it up best: "Distance learning turned my desert of Iraq into a college learning center. I can serve my country as a soldier and feed my mind as a student — both at the same time."

Errol Craig Sull has been teaching online for 12 years. He frequently conducts workshops on and writes about distance learning and currently teaches at Excelsior College.

Security in the Online Schoolhouse

by Alec M. Testa, Ed.D.

A vexing question hangs over the world of online, distance delivered higher education: how can you be sure that the person you are awarding credentials to is the person completing the work? Left unanswered, it threatens the investment of billions of tuition dollars and millions of student hours by undermining the reputations of online universities and their graduates. Awarding meaningful and recognized degrees requires that providers take steps to insure what is known as "academic authenticity." Put simply, insuring academic authenticity means being sure that students aren't cheating. Regrettably, cheating is as old as the schoolhouse itself and takes many forms: plagiarism, sharing test questions, using unauthorized resources during an exam or having someone else complete assignments. Educators in every environment face these challenges, including brick and mortar universities of lofty reputation. Cheating scandals have surfaced recently at Duke University, Indiana University and the



United States Air Force Academy. Online degree providers are employing a number of strategies to confront the problem. Some are remarkably simple and others, still being tested, are technologically more elegant and hold greater promise.

Proctors and student identification is currently the most popular approach. Implementation varies widely. One long

time provider has students arrange for their own proctor. The proctor then completes paper work assuring that institution protocols and instructions were followed. These are returned by mail, as are the test results which are hand scored.

Staff at Charter Oaks College have told me that they have had good

success with students identifying proctors and the College then approving them. Rio Salado College follows a similar approach. Western Governors University (WGU) goes a step further. Students identify potential centers in their communities. These are typically local colleges or universities, libraries or similar public service entities. WGU then contacts the center on behalf of the student, makes all fiscal arrangements and schedules the assessment. All WGU proctored assessments are delivered through an online application. WGU delivers this level of service so that the administration task does not fall to the student and because of the extra level of security it provides.

Another level of service and security is to use a company that specializes in test delivery such as Prometric or Pearson VUE. These companies provide storefront locations with cubicles. The services they provide can include checking multiple forms of identification, photographing candidates and video-taping test sessions. WGU is making the convenience of Prometric Test Centers available to our students, offering delivery into the evening and Saturdays.

While proctors are central to test security, there are at least two efforts to eliminate the need for human monitoring. The Troy University of Alabama is developing a virtual proctor for use with its distributed students. The device includes audio and video surveillance captured through the Internet. A similar device is being developed by Kryterion. The difference

with Kryterion's proctorless proctoring is that they will monitor student behavior, and when their data forensics indicates that the student's behavior is suspect the monitor (again audio and video through the Internet) will be activated. The feed will be recorded and can also be monitored contemporaneously by Kryterion staff who can apply agreed-on business rules

How can you be sure that the person you are awarding credentials to is the person completing the work?

and terminate the test session. Not all assessments are suitable for proctored situations. The obvious example at WGU is student teaching (we hire and train a cadre of clinical supervisors). Many

Continued on page 13

ONLINE LEARNING

Expect

- Fast Tracked Education
- Maximum Transfer Credit
- Personalized Service
- Flexible Learning
- Affordable Tuition

Get

- Career Choices
- Quality Education
- Convenience
- Uninterrupted Lifestyle
- Personal Satisfaction

ASSOCIATE, BACHELOR, MASTER, DOCTOR AND CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS AVAILABLE.

**Expect More From Your Online University.**

COLUMBIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

www.columbiasouthern.edu
800.977.8449 code 405
EXPECT MORE. GET MORE.

ORANGE BEACH • ALABAMA 36561

Nursing Job Sector Healthy; Online Demand Grows

by Som Seng

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services predicts the U.S. will have a shortage of more than 800,000 registered nurses by the year 2020.

Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics support this finding and cite that among all occupations, registered nurses have the largest projected 10-year job growth. They report the demand for nurses in the year 2012 is expected to be 2.9 million, up from 2.3 million in 2002. Total job openings will exceed 1.1 million from 2002 to 2012.

So why the urgent demand for so many nurses? Aging baby boomers for one thing. The baby boom began in 1946 and continued through 1964. During those 19 years, 76 million people were born. Boomers are approaching retirement, including a significant number of nurses. Of course, as millions of baby boomers age the demand for healthcare will increase dramatically. Hospital administrators and nursing care facilities will need to ensure an adequate supply of nurses and other allied health professionals to provide it.

Complicating nursing supply and demand is the fact that many hospitals demand at least a baccalaureate degree



Photo by Rob Carlin

from their nursing candidates. According to the American Nurses Association, some career paths are open only to nurses with baccalaureates. Leading distance learning providers are stepping forward to address the issue.

"We recognize the nursing shortage to be a critical public health issue and offer two RN to Bachelor of Science degree programs geared to preparing nurses for a successful career in healthcare," stated Barbara Macaulay, Chief Academic Officer of UMassOnline. "With the many changes taking place within the profession, nurses need to continually advance their skills to both enhance their careers and become leaders in nursing," concluded Macaulay.

The online RN to BS programs are learner-centered and combine Web-based instruction and student-tailored practice to meet the needs of busy registered nurses. Online nursing courses offer the flexibility to study anytime — anywhere. Clinical practica are offered at locations convenient to home.

In addition to practicum, course work includes: nursing research, cultural diversity issues, community focused nursing, management and writing in nursing.

Is a career in nursing right for you?

Few jobs are as flexible. You can work where and when you want; and if you move, a new job won't be hard to find. You can work full-time, part-time or stop working for a bit to continue your studies or have a family — then jump right back into the workforce. And salaries are on the rise. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the middle half of all registered nurses earned between \$40,140 and \$57,490 in 2002. The highest-paid 10 percent made more than \$69,670. Many employers offer flexible work schedules, childcare, education benefits and bonuses. In addition to its economic rewards, of course, a career in nursing provides enormous emotional and professional satisfactions.

Som Seng is the Marketing and Customer Support Manager for UMassOnline



Photo by Rob Carlin

ONLINE SCHOOLHOUSE: Continued from page 11

assessments require sustained student writing and is frequently iterative. There are at least two strategies that we use to ensure that the work submitted is the work of the registered student. The first is to attempt to construct the task so that synthesis of content is required. This makes it more difficult for students to copy and paste material they find on the Internet. The second strategy is to employ a plagiarism detection service such as Turnitin.com, which mines the Internet and work submitted previously through their site and in a matter of minutes can produce a report that shows if a student has copied from another source.

Kryterion, mentioned earlier, provides other services to those concerned about security. One is a security audit in which an

expert team of psychometricians makes a detailed review and report of an institution's testing operations. Another is data forensics in which test data is analyzed so that any irregularities are ferreted out. The third service provided is a web audit in which the

Internet is scoured to identify villains who may be offering test items or content online.

Online delivery does provide opportunities and challenges for the delivery of higher education. Cheating does occur, and challenges the integrity of the endeavor

just as it does at traditional brick and mortar institutions. Diligence and design are important first steps in protecting programs. Increasingly, technology is offering tools that are equal to the task.

Alec M. Testa is the Director of Assessment at Western Governors University

While proctors are central to test security, there are at least two efforts underway to eliminate the need for human monitoring.

NATION'S DEFENSE: Continued from page 9

organizations.

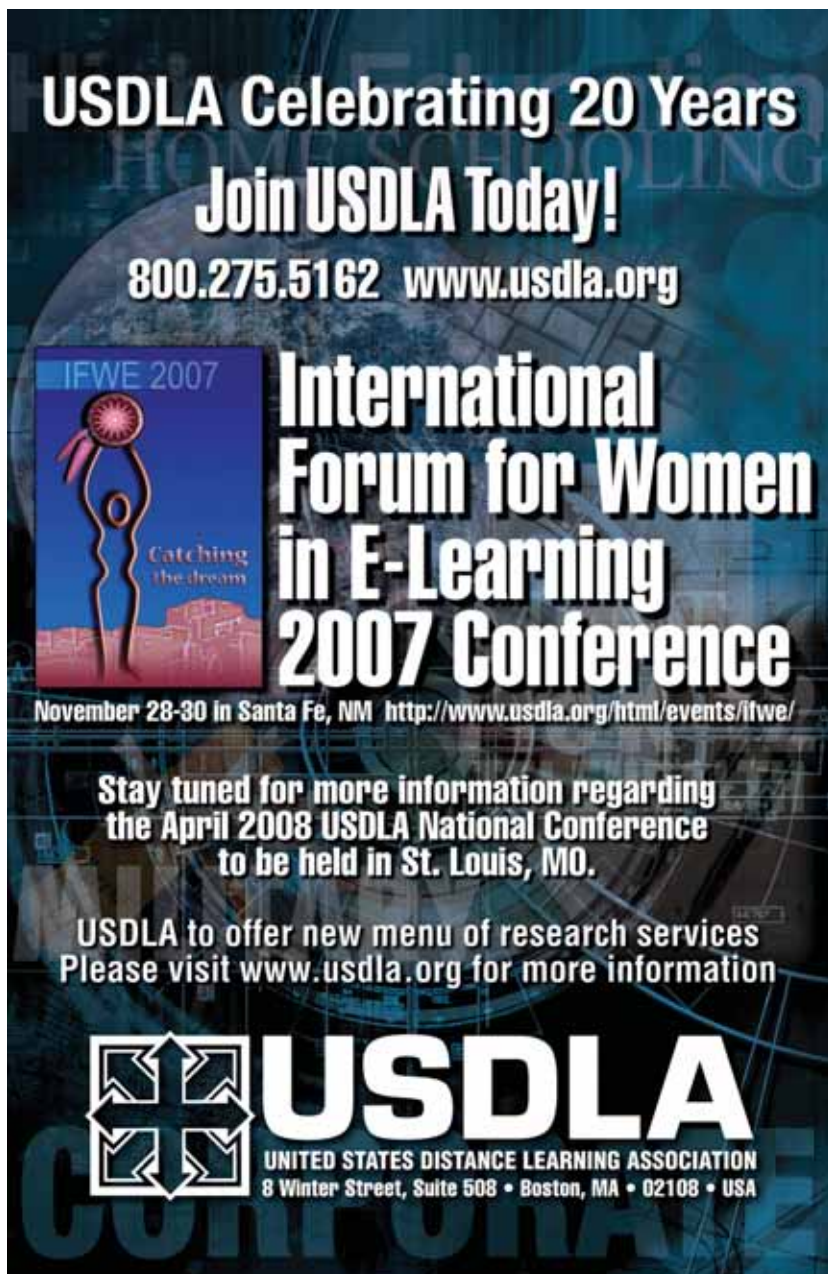
The metrics are truly impressive. From 2001 to 2006, total learning hours increased from 2,560,000 to 6,070,000 per year while the average cost per hour dropped from \$38.78 to \$18.02 per hour. To accomplish this, DAU implements its Performance Learning Model – a model through which traditional classroom training, distance learning, knowledge sharing and other workforce resources are connected and aligned with mission and goals. DAU learning products are available around the clock – more than just a convenience, a necessity with a global, deployed workforce located across several continents and at sea.

Unconventional Threats Require Unconventional Learning Solutions

With modern day challenges of unconventional threats as well as the integration of information systems for net-centric operations, it is not surprising that the military is undergoing a transformation in the way it trains. The global war on terrorism challenges training to prepare the Total Force of Active and Reserve components, civilians, and contractors, to learn, improvise and adapt to constantly changing threats. Furthermore, this needs to be accomplished in a more integrated manner across the military services as well with intergovernmental, interagency, private volunteer organizations, and multinational partners.

The ADL initiative was undertaken to make education, training and lifelong learning accessible at any time, anywhere in the world. It has developed specifications and techniques that are being adopted globally by governments, businesses and schools. ADL has become a technology enabler for the transformation of training. Please consult www.adlnet.gov

Dr. Robert A. Wisher is Director, Advanced Distributed Learning Initiative within the Department of Defense, Washington, DC.



USDLA Celebrating 20 Years
Join USDLA Today!
800.275.5162 www.usdla.org

IFWE 2007
International Forum for Women in E-Learning 2007 Conference
November 28-30 in Santa Fe, NM <http://www.usdla.org/html/events/ifwe/>

Stay tuned for more information regarding the April 2008 USDLA National Conference to be held in St. Louis, MO.

USDLA to offer new menu of research services
Please visit www.usdla.org for more information

USDLA
UNITED STATES DISTANCE LEARNING ASSOCIATION
8 Winter Street, Suite 508 • Boston, MA • 02108 • USA

A Parents Guide to Online Learning, K-12

by Kay Johnson

When it comes to online learning in K-12, many parents lack the information they need to decide if it's the right choice for their child. "At first, everyone thought we were crazy, including my wife," says Bill Arnold, parent of a Florida Virtual School (FLVS) 10th grader. Arnold, a public school teacher, was not comfortable with his family's options for middle school. After a difficult year of home schooling, Arnold's family participated in a test group for online middle school courses with FLVS. That year provided the first-hand look his family needed to embrace the program with confidence.

But not everyone has that option. Asking the right questions is a good place to start. Here are some suggestions:

1) Will my child interact with an actual teacher?

Rick Perkins, Instructional Leader at FLVS, notes that many e-learning options are almost completely self-directed. "Curriculum doesn't teach itself. Students still need the guidance of an instructor," Perkins says. Find out how quickly the teacher responds to questions. Also, what's the turn-around for feedback on assignments? Rule of thumb? Perkins notes that FLVS policy is to return assignments within 48 hours and answer inquiries within 24. Interactions should happen regularly with email, telephone and web conference sessions, white boards, chat rooms and discussion boards.

2) Is your program accredited?

Accreditation covers a range of issues including standards for NCLB's definition of "highly qualified instructors." It also addresses academic rigor and integrity, and it outlines accommodations for students with varying learning needs. For information on nationally recognized accreditation agencies, see this link: <http://distancelearn.about.com/od/accreditationinfo/a/regional.htm>

3) What are the courses like? Will my student work all alone?

"The online experience shouldn't limit a student's interactions or ability to work with others. In fact, it should enhance them," says Perkins. Look for assignments that require students to get away from the computer. Ask if students can work with one another, and find out how that interaction is facilitated and monitored.

4) How is my child going to be assessed?

Assessments should require students to evidence mastery in real-world applications. Arnold cites his daughter's business systems course where, in order to prove proficiency, she was "required to create presentations, operate spreadsheets and run databases—all of which were tied to a real-world business application. Students should be demonstrating what they know in authentic ways," says Arnold.

5) Will local school officials or colleges accept the credit?

Direct this question to your local school, district or your college admissions officer. Ryan Rogers, e-Solutions Manager at FLVS, says that "if courses are written to standards, are part of an accredited program and have outside endorsements, such as NCAA approval, chances are that the district or college will accept the credit." If there are questions, however, the online learning provider should equip you with details you can use to substantiate quality.



6) How much flexibility does the program have?

Some programs undercut the benefits of web-based learning by restricting when and where students access the course, and when they have to finish. "The more flexibility, the better teachers are able to serve all kinds of students," says Perkins.

7) How often are your courses updated?

Courses that are simply textbooks pasted onto a web page won't cut it for the Playstation, MySpace, blog, and cell phone generation. As technologies continue to evolve, courses should incorporate the best advances without sacrificing substance. The dynamic nature of the Internet should be exploited by integrating current events and recent research, rather than allowing content to be dictated by outdated five or ten-year textbook adoption cycles.

8) How do you involve parents?

Arnold particularly likes the "guardian account" that allows him to check grades and communicate with teachers regularly. Also, his daughter's teachers routinely call him monthly, another policy he particularly appreciates. "It shows a real level of commitment to parents."

9) Am I ready for this? Arnold challenges parents to ask themselves, "Am I willing to find the courage to change my concept of education?"

Kids have technology at their fingertips like never before. We need to prepare them to live in today's world." His kid's main complaint? "They don't get a vacation," Arnold says with a chuckle. "FLVS does build in time for vacation into their course 'pace charts,' but my kids have to do exactly what I have to do: They have to plan for their vacation, and work it into the schedule with their teacher."

10) What kind of support is available to students and parents?

The better the support systems for teachers, students and parents, the more time students spend actually learning. "Be sure to ask about the hours and response times for tech help requests," says Rogers. Standard response rates should fall well within 24 hours.

Investigating online options is no easy task, but asking the right questions will give you the tools to make a solid online choice for your child. For more information about K12 online learning, visit the site of the National Council for Online Learning at "<http://www.nacol.org>" www.nacol.org

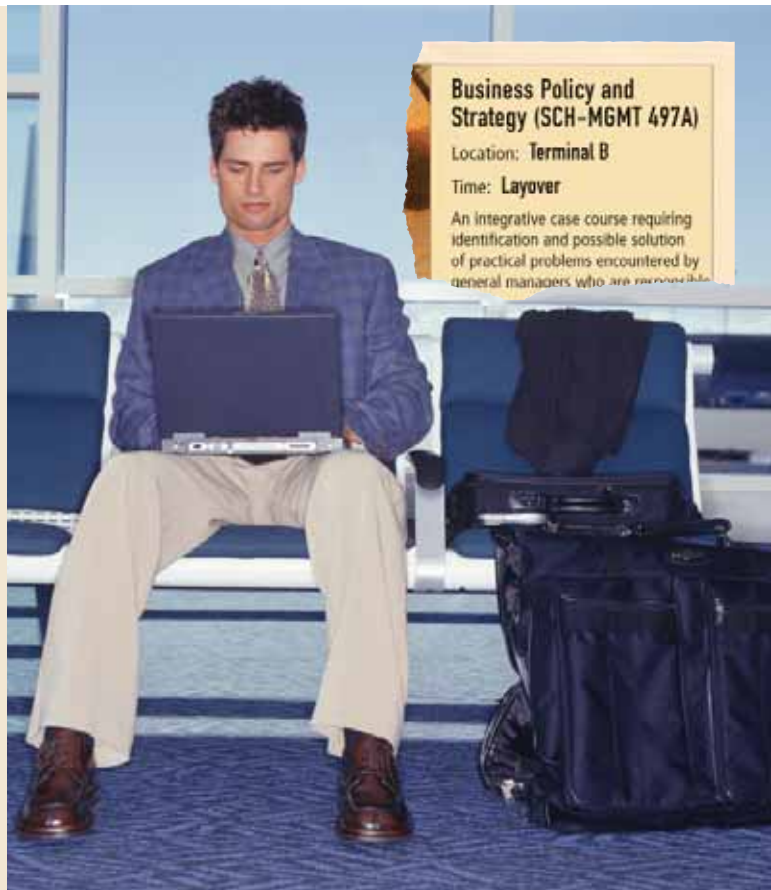
Kay Johnson is the Marketing Manager for Global Services at Florida Virtual School.

UMassOnline

Because Quality Matters.

Earn the same degree and learn from the same world-class faculty as our on-campus students. Accredited online programs give you the flexibility to learn outside the classroom — anytime, anywhere. Choose from over 1,300 online courses and more than 65 degree and certificate programs including:

- Professional MBA
- Master's in Gerontology: Aging Services
- Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction
- Certificate in Forensic Criminology
- Certificate in Online Journalism
- Bachelor of Arts
- Bachelor of Business Administration
- Bachelor of Science in Information Technology
- RN to Bachelor of Science(Nursing)
- Software Development and Design Certificate



www.UMassOnline.net
1-877-698-6277

Guide To More Information About Distance Learning

Nova Southeastern University	www.fischlerschool.nova.edu	866-499-0784
Lynn University	www.lynn.edu/online	800-888-Lynn
New York University	www.scps.nyu.edu/531	888-998-7204 x 531
Northcentral University	www.ncu.edu/compare	866-776-0331
Florida Virtual School	www.flvs.net	407-317-3326 x 2817
Columbia Southern University	www.columbiasouthern.edu	800-977-8449 code 405
US Distance Learning Association	www.usdla.org	800-275-5162
UMASS Online	www.umassonline.net	877-698-6277
Excelsior College	www.degrees.excelsior.edu	888-611-3926 (press 2-7)

Choose the college that goes the distance for working adults.



You've decided to pursue your degree online.
Your next move is to choose the right college.

You want one that is accredited and will accept
prior credit toward a degree. You need one that has
experience in working with adults; one that has strong
academic advisement and a variety of support services.

We've spent more than 35 years helping working adults
earn degrees. Just ask any of our 116,000 graduates
who have earned associate, bachelor's and master's
degrees from us. We have the experience, the programs
and the flexibility.

You need Excelsior College. Start to Finish.

To learn more, visit
degrees.excelsior.edu.

Or call 888-611-3926 (and press 2-7) to speak with
one of our Admissions Counselors today.

EXCELSIOR  COLLEGE®
Start to Finish™

Located at 7 Columbia Circle · Albany, New York 12203 · 518-464-8500. Excelsior College is accredited by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools · 3624 Market Street · Philadelphia, PA 19104 · 215-662-5606. The Commission on Higher Education is an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). The associate, baccalaureate and master's degree programs in nursing are accredited by the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC) · 61 Broadway · New York, NY 10006 · 800-669-1656. The NLNAC is a specialized accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education. The baccalaureate degree programs in electronics engineering technology and nuclear engineering technology are accredited by the Technology Accreditation Commission (TAC) of the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) · 111 Market Place, Suite 1050 · Baltimore, MD 21202 · 410-347-7700. The TAC of ABET is a specialized accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education. All the College's academic programs are registered (i.e., approved) by the New York State Education Department. Excelsior College admits students of any race, color and national or ethnic origin.